اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer
Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi
Surah 57 – Al-Hadid (The Iron)

سُوْرَةُ الْحَدِيْدِ مَدَنِيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

سَبَّحَ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ١

(57-1) All that is in the heavens and the earth extols the glory of Allah. (1) He is the Most Mighty, the Most Wise. (2)

(1) That is, it has always been so that everything in the universe has proclaimed the truth that its Creator and Sustainer is free from every blemish and defect, every weakness, error and evil. He is glorified in His essence, He is glorified in His attributes, He is glorified in His works as well as His commands whether they relate to the creation, or to the religious law for mankind. Here sabbaha has been used in the past tense; at other places yusabbihu has been used which includes both the present and the future tenses. This would signify that every particle in the universe has always been extolling the glory of its Creator and Sustainer in the past, is doing at present and will continue to do the same in the future forever and ever.

(2) That is, not only is He All-Mighty and All-Wise, but the truth is that He alone is All-Mighty and All-Wise. The word Aziz signifies a mighty and powerful Being Whose decrees cannot be prevented by any power in the world from being enforced, Whom no one can oppose and resist, Who has to be obeyed by everyone whether one likes it or not, Whose rebel cannot escape His accountability and punishment in any way. The word Hakim signifies that whatever He does, He does it wisely. His creation, His administration and rule, His commands and guidance, all are based on wisdom. None of His works is tarnished by any tract of folly or ignorance.

There is another fine point here, which one should fully understand. Seldom in the Quran has Allah's attribute of Aziz (All-Mighty) been accompanied by His attributes of being Qawi (Strong), Muqtadir (Powerful), Jabber (Omnipotent), Dhuntiqam (Avenger) and the like, which only signify His absolute power, and this has been so only in places where the context demanded that the wicked and disobedient be warned of Allah's relentless punishment. Apart from such few places, wherever the word Aziz has been used for Allah, it has everywhere been accompanied by one Or other of His attributes of being Hakim (Wise), Alim (Knower), Rahim (Merciful), Ghafur (Forgiving), Wahhab (Generous) and Hamid (Praiseworthy). The reason is that if a being who wields un-limited power is at the same time unwise, ignorant, un-forgiving as well as stingy and devoid of character, its power and authority cannot but lead to injustice and wickedness. Thus, wherever injustice and wickedness is being committed in the world, it is only because the one who wields authority over others, is either using his power un-wisely and foolishly, or he is merciless and hardhearted, or evil-minded and wicked. Wherever power is coupled with these evil traits of character, no good can be expected to result. That is why in the Quran Allah's attribute of Aziz has necessarily been accompanied by His attributes of being All-Wise and Knowing, Compassionate and Forgiving, Praiseworthy and Generous. So that man may know that the God Who is ruling this universe has, on the one hand, such absolute power that no one, from the earth to the heavens, can prevent His decrees from being enforced. But, on the other hand, He is also All-Wise: His each decision is based on perfect wisdom. He is also All- Knowing: whatever decision He makes, it is precisely according to knowledge. He is also Compassionate: He does not use infinite power mercilessly. He is Forgiving as well: He does not punish His creatures for trifling faults, but overlooks their errors. He is also Generous: He does not treat His subjects stingily, but liberally and benevolently. And He is also Praiseworthy: He combines in Himself all praiseworthy virtues and excellences.

The importance of this statement of the Quran can be better understood by those people who are aware of the

discussions of the philosophy of politics and law on the question of sovereignty. Sovereignty connotes that the one who possesses it should wield un-limited power: there should be no internal and external power to change or modify his decision or prevent it from being enforced, and none should have any alternative but to obey him. At the mere concept of this infinite and un-limited power, man's common-sense necessarily demands that whoever attains to such power, should be faultless and perfect in knowledge and wisdom, for if the one holding this power is ignorant, merciless and evil, his sovereignty will inevitably lead to wickedness and corruption. That is why the philosophers, who regarded a single man, or a man-made institution, or an assembly of men as the holder of this power, have had to presume that he or it would be infallible. But obviously, neither can unlimited sovereignty be actually attained by a human power, nor is it possible for a king, or a parliament, or a nation, or a party that it may use the sovereignty attained by it in a limited circle faultlessly and harmlessly. The reason is that the wisdom that is wholly free of every trace of folly, and the knowledge that fully comprehends all the related truths, is not at all possessed even by entire mankind, not to speak of its being attained by an individual, or an institution, or a nation. Likewise, as long as man is man, his being wholly free of and above selfishness, sensuality, fear, greed, desires, prejudice and sentimental love, anger and hate is also not possible. If a person ponders over these truths, he will realize that the Quran is indeed presenting here a correct and perfect view of sovereignty. It says that no one except Allah in this universe is possessor of absolute power, and with this unlimited power He alone is faultless, All-Wise and All- Knowing, Compassionate and Forgiving, and Praiseworthy and Generous in His dealings with Hid subjects.

لَهٗ مُلۡكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ ۚ يُحۡىٖ وَ يُمِيۡتُ ۚ وَ هُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ ۲

(57-2) His is the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and causes death, and He has power over everything.

هُوَ الۡاَوَّلُ وَ الۡاٰخِرُ وَ الظَّاهِرُ وَ الۡبَاطِنُ ۚ وَ هُوَ بِكُلِّ شَىۡءٍ عَلِيۡمٌ ۚ﴿۳﴾

(57-3) He is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden, (3) and He has knowledge of everything.

(3) That is, when there was nothing, He was, and when there will be nothing, He will be. He is the most Manifest of all the manifests, for whatever manifests itself in the world, does so only by His attributes and His works and His light. And He is the Most Hidden of all the hidden, for not only do the senses fail to perceive Him but the intellect and thought and imagination also cannot attain to His essence and reality. The best commentary in this regard is a supplication of the Prophet (peace be upon him) which Imam Ahmad, Muslim, Tirmidhi, and Baihaqi have related on the authority of Abu Hurairah, and Hafiz Abu Yala Mosuli in his Musnad on the authority of Aishah:

Antal Awwal, fa-laisa qablaka shaiin; wa Antal Akhir falaisa ba daka shaiin; wa Antal Zahir, fa-laisa fauqaka shai in; wa Anfal Batin, fa laisa dunaka shaiin. You alone are the First; none is before You; You alone are the Last: none is after You; You alone are the Exalted none is above You; You alone are the Hidden: none is more hidden than You.

Here, the question arises: How does this accord with the immortality and eternal life of the dwellers of Paradise and Hell mentioned in the Quran when Allah alone is the Last and Eternal? Its answer has been provided by the Quran itself: Everything is perishable except Allah Himself. (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 88). In other words no creature is immortal in its personal capacity; if a thing exists or continuous to exist, it does so because Allah keeps it so, and can exist only by His letting it exist; otherwise in its own capacity everything is perishable except Allah. Immortality in Heaven and Hell will not be bestowed upon somebody because he is immortal by himself, but because Allah will grant him eternal life. The same is true of the angels, they are not immortal by themselves. When Allah willed they came into existence, and will continue to exist only as long as He wills.

هُوَ الَّذِیۡ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضَ فِیۡ سِتَّۃِ اَیَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسۡتَوٰی عَلَی الۡعَرۡشِ ؕ یَعۡلَمُ مَا یَلِجُ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ وَ مَا یَخۡرُجُ مِنۡہَا وَ مَا یَنۡزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ وَ مَا یَعۡرُجُ فِیۡہَا ؕ وَ ہُوَ مَعَکُمۡ اَیۡنَ مَا کُنۡتُمۡ ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ بَصِیۡرٌ ۴

(57-4) He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days and then established Himself on the Throne. (4) He knows all that enters the earth and all that comes forth from it, and all that comes down from the heaven and all that goes up to it. (5) He is with you wherever you are.[6] Allah sees all that you do.

(4) That is, He alone is the Creator of the universe as well as its Ruler. (For further explanation, see (E.Ns 41, 42 of Surah Al-Araf); (E.N. 4 of Suran Yunus); (E.Ns 2 to 5 of Surah Ar-Rad), (E.Ns 11 to 15 of Surah Ha Meem As-Sajdah).

(5) In other words, He is not only the Knower of the all but also of the parts. He knows each seed that goes under the layers of the soil, each leaf and bud that comes out of the soil, each rain-drop that falls from the sky, and each molecule of the vapor that ascends from the seas and lakes to the sky. He is aware of every seed lying anywhere under the soil. That is how He causes it to split and sprout up and develop. He is aware of how much vapor has risen from each different place and where it has reached. That is how he collects it into cloud and distributes it and causes it to fall as rain in due measure on different place of the earth. The same is true of the details of everything that goes into the earth and comes out of it, and of everything that ascends to the sky and descends from it. If all this were not comprehended by Allah in His knowledge, it would not be possible for Him to plan and order each thing separately and to regulate and control it in a wise manner.

(6) That is, nowhere are you outside Allah’s knowledge, His power, His rule, His management and administration. Allah knows wherever you are, whether in the earth, or the air, or the water, or in a secret place. Your being alive there is by itself a proof that Allah is providing for you in that very place. If your heart is beating, if your lungs are breathing, if yow hearing and yow sight are functioning, it is only because all parts of yow body are

working under Allah’s rule. And if death comes to you at any place; it comes because Allah takes a decision to stop providing for you and to recall you from the world.

لَ ۚ مُ كُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ ا لَاَضِ ؕ وَ اِلَى اللّٰ ِ ۤ ۤ ۤ

يُولِجُ الَّيۡلَ فِى النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِى الَّيۡلِ‌ؕ وَهُوَ عَلِيۡمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوۡرِ ۝٦

(57-6) He causes the night to pass into the day, and causes the day to pass into the night, and He fully knows all that is hidden in the breasts of people.

اٰمِنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ وَاَنۡفِقُوۡا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمۡ مُّسۡتَخۡلَفِيۡنَ فِيۡهِ‌ؕ فَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا مِنۡكُمۡ وَاَنۡفَقُوۡا لَهُمۡ اَجۡرٌ كَبِيۡرٌ ۝٧

(57-7) Believe in Allah and in His Messenger (7) and expend (8) of what He has entrusted to you. (9) A great reward awaits those of you who believe and spend their wealth. (10)

(7) The addressees here are not the non-Muslims, but, as is borne out by the whole subsequent discourse, the Muslims who had affirmed the faith and joined the ranks of the believers, but were not fulfilling the demands of the faith and conducting themselves as true believers should. It is obvious that non-Muslims cannot be invited to affirm the faith and then immediately asked to subscribe generously to the cause of jihad for the sake of Allah, nor can they be told that whoever would fight and spend his wealth in the cause of Allah before the victory, would attain to a higher rank than him who would perform these services later, For, when a non-Muslim is invited to the faith, the preliminary demands of it only are presented before him and not the ultimate once, Therefore, in view of the context, the meaning of saying: “Believe in Allah and His messenger,” here would be: O people, who profess to have affirmed the faith and have joined the ranks of the Muslims, believe in Allah and Messenger (peace be upon him) sincerely and conduct yourselves as the true and sincere believers should.

(8) Here, by spending is not implied spending on public welfare, but, as is clearly borne out by the words of verse 10, it implies subscribing to the cause of the war effort that was being waged at that time under the leadership of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to uphold Islam against paganism. Two things, in particular, were such for which the Islamic Government at that

time stood in great need of financial help. First, the war equipment; second, supporting and sustaining the oppressed Muslims, who, due to persecution by the disbelievers had emigrated, and were still emigrating, to Al-Madinah from every corner of Arabia, The sincere Muslims were trying their best to render as much help as they could but meeting the entire expenses in this regard was much beyond their means and resources, and their this same spirit of sacrifice has been commended in verses 10, 12, 18 and 19 below. But among the Muslims there were quite a number of well-to-do people, who were watching this struggle between Islam and paganism as mere spectators and had no feelings whatsoever that the faith they claimed to believe in also imposed certain rights on their life and wealth. This second kind of people are the addressees of this verse, They have been exhorted to believe sincerely, and to spend their wealth in the cause of Allah.

(9) This has two meanings and both are implied here. The first meaning is: The wealth that you possess is not, in fact, your personal property but has been given to you by Allah. You are not its exclusive master and owner. Allah has given you proprietary right over it as His vicegerent. Therefore, you should have no hesitation in spending it in the service of the real Master. It is not for the vicegerent to withhold the Master's wealth from being spent for the Master's own sake. The second meaning is: Neither has this wealth been with you since ever, nor will it remain in your possession forever, Yesterday it was in some other people's possession; then Allah made you their successor and entrusted it to you, A time will come when it will not remain with you but some other people will succeed you as its owners, Therefore, in this short-lived ownership, when you are its trustees, spend it in the cause of Allah so that in the Hereafter you may be rewarded for it permanently and eternally. This same thing has been stated by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a Hadith. Tirmidhi relates that once a goat was slaughtered in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) house and its flesh was given away to the poor. When he came to the house and asked: What remains of the goat? Aishah replied: Nothing but a shoulder. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) remarked: Nay, the whole goat but the shoulder. That

is, whatever has been given away for the sake of Allah, has, in fact, been saved. According to another Hadith, a person asked: O Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah, what kind of charity brings the highest reward? He replied: That you should give away a thing in charity when you are hale and hearty: When you feel it could be saved and may like to invest it in the hope of earning more. Do not wait till death when you may say: Give this to so and so and that to so and so, for at that time the wealth has in any case to pass on to so and so. (Bukhari, Muslim). According to another Hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Man says: My wealth! My wealth! whereas his own share in his wealth is no more than what he has eaten up, or worn away, or passed on in charity? Whatever remains will leave him and will be passed on to others (Muslim).

(10) Here again, spending wealth in the cause of jihad has been regarded as an essential demand of the faith and a proof of one's sincerity in it, as if to say: The true and sincere believer is he who does not shirk spending wealth on such an occasion.

وَ مَا لَكُمۡ لَا تُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِاللّٰهِ ۙ وَ الرَّسُوۡلُ يَدۡعُوۡكُمۡ لِتُؤۡمِنُوۡا بِرَبِّكُمۡ وَ قَدۡ
اَخَذَ مِيۡثَاقَكُمۡ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ۸

(57-8) How is it that you do not believe in Allah when the Messenger calls you to believe in your Lord (11) and although he has taken a covenant from you, (12) if indeed you are believers?

(11) That is, you are adopting this unbelieving attitude and conduct at a time when the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah is present among you, and you are receiving the invitation to the faith not through an indirect and remote means but directly through the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah himself.

(12) Some commentators have taken this pledge to imply the pledge of service to Allah, which had been taken at the beginning of creation from the future offspring of Adam (peace be upon him), and some others take it for the pledge with which man has been naturally endowed to serve and obey Allah. But the truth is that it implies the conscious pledge of obedience to Allah and His

Messenger (peace be upon him) that every Muslim makes to his Lord by the affirmation of the faith. At another place in the Quran this same pledge has been referred to thus:

Keep in mind the blessing Allah has bestowed upon you and do not forget the solemn covenant which He made with you and which you confirmed, when you said: We have heard and submitted. Fear Allah for Allah knows the very secrets of the hearts. (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 7).

Ubadah bin Samit relates: The Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah had made us pledge that we would listen and obey both in sound health and in ill health; would spend in the cause of Allah both in prosperity and in adversity; would enjoin the good and forbid the evil; would proclaim the truth for the sake of Allah and would not fear the blame of any one in this regard (Musnad Ahmad).

هُوَ الَّذِیۡ یُنَزِّلُ عَلٰی عَبۡدِہٖۤ اٰیٰتٍۭ بَیِّنٰتٍ لِّیُخۡرِجَکُمۡ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَی النُّوۡرِ ؕ
وَ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ بِکُمۡ لَرَءُوۡفٌ رَّحِیۡمٌ ۹

(57-9) He it is Who sends down Clear Signs to His servant so as to bring you out from darkness into light. Surely Allah is Most Kind and Most Compassionate to you.

وَ مَا لَكُمْ اَلَّا تُنْفِقُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَ لِلّٰهِ مِيْرَاثُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ ؕ لَا
يَسْتَوِيْ مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ اَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَ قٰتَلَ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ
اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَ قٰتَلُوْا ؕ وَ كُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ۝١٠

(57-10) How is it that you do not expend in the Way of Allah when to Allah belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth? (13) Those who spent their wealth and took part in fighting before the Victory cannot be equated (with those who spent their wealth and took part in fighting afterwards). They are higher in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards. (14) But to each Allah has promised a good reward. Allah is well aware of all that you do. (15)

(13) This has two meanings:

(1) Your wealth is not going to stay with you forever. One day you will leave it behind; then Allah alone will inherit it. Thus the best thing would be that you should spend it yourself in the cause of Allah so that your reward for it is guaranteed with Allah. If you do not spend it yourself, it will in any case return to Allah, but then you will not be entitled to any reward from Him.

(2) You should have no fear of indigence and poverty when you spend it in the cause of Allah, because Allah for Whose sake you would spend your wealth is the Owner of all the treasures of the heavens and the earth. He possessed not only what He has bestowed on you today but has much more to bestow on you tomorrow. This same thing has been expressed at another place, thus:
O Prophet, say to them: My Lord gives abundantly to whomever of His servants He wills and sparingly to whomever He wills. Whatever you spend, He replenishes it by other provisions: He is the best of Providers. (Surah Saba, Ayat 39).

(14) That is, although both are entitled to the reward, yet the former are necessarily higher in rank than the latter, for they faced greater risks for the sake of Allah in difficult circumstances, which the latter not. They spent their wealth at a time when there appeared no remote chance of victory that would compensate for

their expenditure, and they fought the disbelieves at a critical time when there was an ever present apprehension that the enemy might overpower and crush the followers of Islam completely. Mujahid, Qatadah and Zaid bin Aslam, from among the commentators, say that the word victory in this verse has been used for the conquest of Makkah, and Amir Shabi says that it refers to the truce of Hudaibiyah. The former view has been adopted by most of the commentators, and in support of the latter this tradition from Abu Saeed Khudri is presented: During the time when the truce of Hudaibiyah was concluded, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to us: In the near future there will appear the people whose deeds will make you look upon your own deeds as mean and trifling, but even if one of them possessed a mountain of gold and he spent all of it in the cause of Allah, he would not attain to your spending two pounds, or even one pound of it. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Marduyah, Abu Nuaim Isfahani). Furthermore, it is also supported by the Hadith which Imam Ahmad has related on the authority of Anas. He says: Once a dispute arose between Khalid bin Walid and Hadrat Abdur Rahman bin Auf, in the course of which Khalid said to Abdur Rahman: You people assume your superiority over us on account of your past services. When this thing came to the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) notice, he said: By God in whose hand is my lift, even if you people spent gold equal (in weight) to Mount Uhud, or equal to other mountains, you would not attain to the deeds of these people. From this it is argued that in this verse victory refers to the truce of Hudaibiyah, for Khalid bin Walid had embraced Islam after this truce and had participated in the conquest of Makkah. However, whether victory in this particular case is taken to imply the truce of Hudaibiyah or the conquest of Makkah, in any case the verse does not mean that the distinction of the ranks is confined to this one victory alone, but as a general principle it shows that those who fight and spend in the cause of Islam at the time when disbelief and disbelievers appear to be dominant and Islam seems to have no remote chance of victory, are far superior in rank to those who make sacrifices after the conflict between Islam and paganism has been decided in favor of Islam.

(15) That is, Allah does not bestow His favors blindly. He sees who has performed what deeds, under what kind of circumstances, and with what motive and then determines the rank and the reward of the deed of each person with full justice and awareness.

مَن ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ وَلَهُ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾

(57:11) Who is it that will give Allah a beautiful loan? A loan that Allah will repay after increasing it many times and grant him a generous reward. (16)

(16) How Generous and Beneficent is Allah that if a man spends the wealth granted by Himself in His way, He calls it a loan Himself, provided that it is a good loan, that is, a loan which in given with a pure intention, without any selfish motive of winning reputation and renown, or of doing favor to somebody, but only for the sake of Allah's approval and to win His good-will and rewards. Allah makes two promises in this regard:

(1) That He will repay it increasing it manifold.
(2) That He will also give from Himself the best reward for it.

According to a Hadith reported by Abdullah bin Masud, when this verse was revealed and the people heard it from the Prophet (peace be upon him), Abud Dahdah Ansari asked: O Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah, does Allah want a loan from us?" The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Yes, O Abud-Dahdah. He said: Kindly show me your hand. The Prophet (peace be upon him) extended his hand towards him. He took his hand in his own hand and said: I give away my garden in loan to my Lord. Abdullah bin Masud says that the garden had 600 datepalms and also his own house in which his family lived. Saying this to the Prophet (peace be upon him) he went straight back home, and calling out to his wife said: Come out, O mother of Dahdah, I have loaned this garden to my Lord. She replied: Dahdah's father, you have made a good bargain, and she immediately vacated and left

the garden with her children. (Ibn Abi Hatim). This incident throws light on the conduct of the sincere believers of that time, and from this one can also understand the kind of the good loan that Allah has promised to return increasing it manifold with a rich reward in addition.

وَ مَ تَرَى ا ۡ ُؤۡمِنِيۡ نَ وَ ا ۡ ُؤۡ مِنٰتِ يَسۡعٰى ُوۡرُهُم بَيۡنَ اَيۡدِيهِم وَ
بِاَ يۡمَانِهِم بُ ۡشٰرىكُمُ ا ۡيَ ۡوَمَ جَنّٰتٌ تَ ۡجِ ۡ ِ ن تَ ۡحتِهَا ا ۡاَ ۡ ٰرُ ٰخلِدِ نَ ِيۡهَ ۡيٰذٰلِكَ ُوَ ا ۡفَ ۡوُ ا ۡعَظِ ۡمُ
﴿١٢﴾

(57:12) On that Day you will see believing men and women that their light will be running before them and on their right hands. (17) (They will be told): “A good tiding to you today.” There shall be Gardens beneath which rivers flow; therein they shall abide. That indeed is the great triumph.

(17) This and the following verses show that the light on the Day of Judgment will be specifically meant for the righteous believers only. As for the disbelievers and the hypocrites and the wicked people, they will be wandering about in the darkness as they had been in the world. The light there will be the light of righteous deeds. The sincerity of the faith and the piety of the character and conduct will turn into light that will lend brightness to the personality of the virtuous. The brighter the deed the more luminous will be his person, and when he will walk towards Paradise, his light will be running forward before him. The best explanation of it is Qatadah’s mursal tradition in which he says; The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The light of someone will be so strong and sharp that it will be running on before him equal to the distance between Al-Madinah and Aden, of another equal to the distance between Madinah and Sana, and of another even less than that; so much so that there will be a believer whose light will just extend beyond his steps. (Ibn Jarir). In other words, the intensity of the light of a person will be proportionate to the extent of the good done and spread by him in the world, and the beams of his light will be running on before him in the Hereafter extending as far as his good will have extended in the world.

Here, a question may arise in the mind of the reader: One can understand the meaning of their light running on before the believers but what does their light running on only on their right hand mean? Will there be darkness on their left side? The answer is: When a man is walking with a light on his right hand, his left side also will be bright, though the fact of the matter is that the light will be on his right hand. This has been explained by the Hadith, which Abu Dharr and Abu Darda have reported, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: I shall recognize the righteous people of my ummah by their light which will be running on before them and on their right and on their left. (Hakim, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Marduyah).

يَوۡمَ يَقُوۡلُ الۡمُنٰفِقُوۡنَ وَالۡمُنٰفِقٰتُ لِلَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوا انۡظُرُوۡنَا نَقۡتَبِسۡ مِنۡ نُّوۡرِكُمۡ ۚ قِيۡلَ ارۡجِعُوۡا وَرَآءَكُمۡ فَالۡتَمِسُوۡا نُوۡرًا ؕ فَضُرِبَ بَيۡنَهُمۡ بِسُوۡرٍ لَّهٗ بَابٌ ؕ بَاطِنُهٗ فِيۡهِ الرَّحۡمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهٗ مِنۡ قِبَلِهِ الۡعَذَابُ ؕ﴿۱۳﴾

(57:13) On that Day the hypocrites, both men and women, shall say to the believers: “Look at us that we may extract some light from your light.” (18) They will be told: “Go back and seek light for yourselves elsewhere.” Then a wall shall be erected between them with a door in it. On the inside of it there will be mercy, and on the outside of it there will be chastisement. (19)

(18) It means that when the believers will be going towards Paradise, the light will be before them, and the hypocrites will be stumbling about in the darkness behind. At that time they will call out to the believers, who lived with them together in the same Muslim society in the world, saying: Look back towards us awhile so that we also may get some light.

(19) This means that the people of Paradise will enter it through a gate and then the gate will be closed. On one side of the gate there will be the blessings of Paradise and on the other the torment of Hell. For the hypocrites it will not be possible to cross the barrier that will stand between them and Paradise.

يُنَادُوۡنَهُمۡ اَلَمۡ نَكُنۡ مَّعَكُمۡ ؕ قَالُوۡا بَلٰى وَلٰكِنَّكُمۡ فَتَنۡتُمۡ اَنۡفُسَكُمۡ وَتَرَبَّصۡتُمۡ وَارۡتَبۡتُمۡ وَغَرَّتۡكُمُ الۡاَمَانِىُّ حَتّٰى جَآءَ اَمۡرُ اللّٰهِ وَغَرَّكُمۡ بِاللّٰهِ الۡغَرُوۡرُ ﴿۱۴﴾

(57-14) The hypocrites will call out to the believers: “Were we not with you?” (20) The believers will reply: “Yes; but you allowed yourselves to succumb to temptations, (21) and you wavered (22) and you remained in doubt (23) and false expectations deluded you until Allah's command came to pass, (24) and the Deluder (25) deluded you concerning Allah.

(20) That is, did we not live with you together in the same Muslim society? Did we not affirm the faith? Did we not offer the Prayers along with you and observe the Fast and perform the Hajj and pay the Zakat? Did we not sit with you in your assemblies and were we not bound in marriage ties and kinship with you? Then, how is it that we have been separated from you today?

(21) That is, in spite of your claim to be Muslims, you never believed like true and sincere Muslims and remained suspended between belief and unbelief. You still had your interests attached to disbelief and the disbelievers and you never gave yourselves up wholly to Islam.

(22) Tarabbus (from which tarabbastum of the text is derived) means to wait and tarry for an opportunity. When a person is unable to decide which of the two alternative ways he should choose but stands and waits to consider which way should be more favorable for him to follow, he is involved in tarabbus. The hypocrites had adopted the same attitude during the critical time of the conflict between Islam and un-Islam. Neither were they siding with disbelief openly nor were spending their energy to support and help Islam with full conviction. They were sitting on the fence, waiting to see which party in the conflict became dominant, so that if it was Islam they may join it on the basis of their affirmation of the faith, and if it was unbelief they may side with its supporters taking advantage of their neutral position in the conflict.

(23) This implies different kinds of doubts that a hypocrite suffers from, and the same also are the actual causes of his hypocrisy. He doubts the existence of God, the Prophethood of

the Prophet, the Quran's being Allah's book, the Hereafter, its accountability, and its rewards and punishments, and he doubts whether the conflict between the truth and falsehood is real, or a mere delusion; as for himself he considers the only truth to be that one should enjoy life and its pleasures to the full. For unless a person is involved in such doubts he can never be a hypocrite.

(24) This can have two meanings:

(1) Until death came to him, you could not shed this delusion till the last moment.

(2) That Islam became dominant, while you looked on unconcerned.

(25) That is, Satan.

فَالۡيَوۡمَ لَا يُؤۡخَذُ مِنۡكُمۡ فِدۡيَةٌ وَّلَا مِنَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا ؕ مَاۡوٰىكُمُ النَّارُ ؕ هِىَ مَوۡلٰىكُمۡ ؕ وَبِئۡسَ الۡمَصِيۡرُ ﴿۱۵﴾

(57:15) So no ransom shall be accepted from you today, nor from those who disbelieved. (26) You are destined for the Fire. That will be your guardian. (27) And that indeed is a grievous destination.

(26) This clearly shows that in the Hereafter the hypocrites will be doomed to the same fate as the disbelievers.

(27) The words hiya maula kum (Hell is your maula) can have two meanings:

(1) That Hell is the only proper place for you.

(2) That you never took Allah as your maula (friend, patron) so that He may look after you. Now Hell only is your maula, therefore, Hell now will look after you.

اَلَمۡ یَاۡنِ لِلَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اَنۡ تَخۡشَعَ قُلُوۡبُہُمۡ لِذِکۡرِ اللّٰہِ وَ مَا نَزَلَ مِنَ
الۡحَقِّ ۙ وَ لَا یَکُوۡنُوۡا کَالَّذِیۡنَ اُوۡتُوا الۡکِتٰبَ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ فَطَالَ عَلَیۡہِمُ الۡاَمَدُ فَقَسَتۡ قُلُوۡبُہُمۡ ؕ وَ
کَثِیۡرٌ مِّنۡہُمۡ فٰسِقُوۡنَ ﴿۱۶﴾

(57:16) Is the time not come that the hearts of the believers should be humbled to Allah's remembrance and to the Truth that He has revealed, (28) and that they should not be like those who were vouchsafed the Book and then a long time elapsed so that their hearts were hardened? A great many of them are now evil-doers. (29)

(28) Here again, the word believers is general, but it does not apply to all the Muslims; it refers to those particular Muslims who had professed the faith verbally and joined the followers of the Prophet (peace be upon him) though their hearts were devoid of any concern for Islam. They were watching that the pagan forces were bent upon wiping out Islam; they had encircled the handful of Muslims from all sides, who were being made the target of persecution everywhere in Arabia, and thus the oppressed Muslims were fleeing to Al-Madinah empty-handed for refuge; the sincere Muslims were extending to them whatever economic help they could; yet they were, at the same time, engaged in a life and death struggle with the enemy. But, in spite of this, these people who professed the faith were not being moved at all. So, here, they are being put to shame. As if to say: What kind of believers are you? At this critical juncture for Islam, is it not yet the time that your hearts should melt at the mention of Allah and be filled with the spirit of sacrifice for the sake of His religion. Can the believers be such that they have no feelings for Islam when it is confronted with hard times. That they may sit unconcerned when they are summoned in the name of Allah. That the hearts may neither tremble out of fear of Allah nor bow to His command when He Himself should make an appeal for contributions in the Book sent down by Him, declaring it as a loan to Himself and plainly telling that the one who would regard his wealth as dearer than the cause of the true faith would be a hypocrite and not a believer.

(29) That is, the Jews and the Christians seem to have lost fervor and degenerated spiritually and morally hundreds of years after the passing away of their Prophets. But have you already become so depraved that while the Prophet (peace be upon him) is still present among you, and the Book of God is still being revealed, and not much time has passed over you since you affirmed the faith, and you have started behaving like the Jews and the Christians who have reached this state through centuries of playing and tempering with the Book of Allah and its verses.

اِعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحۡىِ الۡاَرۡضَ بَعۡدَ مَوۡتِهَا ؕ قَدۡ بَيَّنَّا لَـكُمُ الۡاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ۱۷

(57:17) Know well that Allah revives the earth after it becomes lifeless. We have clearly shown Our Signs to you, perchance you will use your reason. (30)

(30) The point contained here should be well understood. At several places in the Quran the Prophethood and the revelation of the Book have been compared to the rainfall, for the effects produced by them on humanity are precisely like those produced by rain on the soil. Just as the dead earth swells and blooms as soon as it receives a shower of rain, so it is with the dead humanity in a country where a Prophet is raised through Allah's mercy and revelation begins to be sent down to him. It starts revealing those virtues which lay hidden and suppressed for ages. It starts manifesting from within itself excellent morals and good deeds and virtues of every kind. Allusion has been made to this truth here so as to open the eyes of the Muslims of the weak faith and to make them ponder their state. The way humanity was being reformed by the blessed rainfall of the Prophethood and revelation and the way it was being richly and generously blessed in every way was not a remote story for them. They were observing it themselves in the pious and righteous society of the companions and experiencing it day and night around them. Polytheism with all its evils was present before them while the virtues and good things emanating from Islam were also blooming and flourishing before their eyes. Therefore, they did not need to be told any details. An allusion was enough to the effect. The

signs of how Allah grants life to the dead earth through the rainfall of His mercy have been shown to you. Now you should use your common sense and consider it for yourself as to what benefit you arc deriving from this blessing.

اِنَّ الۡمُصَّدِّقِيۡنَ وَ الۡمُصَّدِّقٰتِ وَ اَقۡرَضُوا اللّٰهَ قَرۡضًا حَسَنًا يُّضٰعَفُ لَهُمۡ وَ لَهُمۡ اَجۡرٌ كَرِيۡمٌ ۚ﴿۱۸﴾

(57:18) Verily those who give alms [31] be they men or women, and give Allah a beautiful loan shall be repaid after increasing it many times; and theirs shall be a generous reward.

(31) Sadaqah, as an Islamic term, is the charity given sincerely and with a pure intention only with a view to seek Allah's good pleasure without making any show of it, and without the intention of doing any favor to the recipient. The donor should give it only because he has a true feeling of the service of his Lord. The word is derived from sidq, therefore, sadaqat (sincerity) is of its essence. No charity and no spending of the wealth can be a sadaqah unless it springs from a sincere and pure motive of spending only for the sake of Allah.

وَ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَ رُسُلِهٖۤ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الصِّدِّيۡقُوۡنَ ۖ وَ الشُّهَدَآءُ عِنۡدَ رَبِّهِمۡ ؕ لَهُمۡ اَجۡرُهُمۡ وَ نُوۡرُهُمۡ ؕ وَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا وَ كَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَاۤ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصۡحٰبُ الۡجَحِيۡمِ ﴿۱۹﴾

(57:19) In Allah's sight only those who truly believe in Allah and His Messengers [32] are utterly truthful [33] and true bearers of witness(for the sake of Allah). [34] For them is their reward and their light. [35] As for those who gave the lie to Our Signs, they are the people of Hell.

(32) Here, the believers imply those people of true faith whose attitude and conduct was absolutely different from that of the people of weak faith and the false claimants to Islam, and who were at that time vying with one another in making monetary sacrifices and were struggling with their lives in the cause of the true faith.

(33) Siddiq (most truthful) is the superlative from sidq; however, one should clearly understand that sidq is not merely a statement conforming to the truth, but a statement which is not only true in itself but its speaker also upholds it as a truth sincerely. For instance, if a person says that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is Allah's Messenger, this is by itself precisely according to the truth, for the Prophet (peace be upon him) is truly Allah's Messenger, but the person would be true in his statement only if he also believed and upheld him as Allah's Messenger. Therefore, a thing would be sidq if what was said was in conformity with the truth as well as with the speaker's own conscience. Likewise, sidq also contains the sense of faithfulness, sincerity and practical righteousness. Sadiq-ul-waad would be the person who kept his promise practically, who never broke it. Sadiq (true friend) would be he who did full justice to friendship in the time of need, and who never proved faithless to anybody in any way. In war, sadiq-fil-qital (true soldier) would be the one who fought with all his heart and body and established his valor practically. Thus, sidq in essence implies that one's deed should fully conform to his word. The one who acts contrary to his word cannot be sadiq. On that very basis, the one who preaches one thing and acts contrary to it is regarded as a false preacher. With this meaning of sidq and sadiq in view one can fully appreciate the meaning of the superlative sadiq. It would inevitably imply a righteous person who is free from every impurity, who has never swerved from the truth and piety, who could never be expected to say anything against his conscience. Who believed in whatever he believed with full sincerity and remained faithful to it under all circumstances, and who has practically proved that he is a true believer in the full sense of the word. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 99 of Surah An-Nisa).

(34) The early commentators have differed about the explanation of this verse. Ibn Abbas, Masruq, Dahhak, Muqatil bin Hayyan and others say that the previous sentence ended with humsssiddiqun; and wash-shuhadauinda Rabbihim la-hum ajru-hum wa nuru-hum is a separate and independent sentence According to this explanation, the translation of the sentence would be: Those who have believed in Allah and His Messenger,

are indeed the most truthful (as siddiqun); as for the true witnesses (ash-shuhada), they will have their reward and their light from their Lord. Contrary to this, Mujahid and several other commentators regard this whole expression as one sentence. According to them the translation would be that which we have given in the text above. The two commentaries differ because the first group has taken the word shahid in the meaning of the martyr in the way of Allah and seeing that every believer is not a shahid in this sense, has taken wash-shuhadau inda Rabbi-him as a separate sentence. But the other group takes shahid in the meaning of the witness of the truth, and not in the sense of the martyr, and in this sense every believer is a shahid. We are of the opinion that this second commentary is preferable and this is;

And thus We have made you a middle nation that you may be witnesses against mankind, and the messenger may be a witness against you. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 143).

Allah had called you Muslims before this and has also called you (by the same name) in this (Quran) so that the Messenger may be a witness in regard to you and you may be witnesses in regard to the rest of mankind. (Surah Al- Hajj, Ayat 78).

In a Hadith, Bara bin Azib has related that he heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) say: The believers of my Ummah are shahid (the witnesses); then he recited this very verse of Surah Al-Hadid. (Ibn Jarir). Ibn Marduyah has related on the authority of Abu ad-Darda the tradition that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The one who emigrates from a land in order to save his life and his faith from temptation, is recorded as a siddiq (most truthful), and when he dies, Allah takes his soul as a shahid (true witness). Then after this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited this very verse. (For the explanation of this meaning of shahadat, see (E.N. 144 of Surah Al-Baqarah); (E.N. 99 of Surah An-Nisa), (E.N. 82 of Surah Al-Ahzab).

(35) That is, each one of them will receive the reward and the light of the measure and degree he deserves. They will all get their own respective rewards and lights and their shares have already been reserved for them.

اِعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّمَا الۡحَیٰوۃُ الدُّنۡیَا لَعِبٌ وَّ لَہۡوٌ وَّ زِیۡنَۃٌ وَّ تَفَاخُرٌۢ بَیۡنَکُمۡ وَ تَکَاثُرٌ فِی الۡاَمۡوَالِ وَ الۡاَوۡلَادِ ؕ کَمَثَلِ غَیۡثٍ اَعۡجَبَ الۡکُفَّارَ نَبَاتُہٗ ثُمَّ یَہِیۡجُ فَتَرٰىہُ مُصۡفَرًّا ثُمَّ یَکُوۡنُ حُطَامًا ؕ وَ فِی الۡاٰخِرَۃِ عَذَابٌ شَدِیۡدٌ ۙ وَّ مَغۡفِرَۃٌ مِّنَ اللّٰہِ وَ رِضۡوَانٌ ؕ وَ مَا الۡحَیٰوۃُ الدُّنۡیَاۤ اِلَّا مَتَاعُ الۡغُرُوۡرِ ﴿۲۰﴾

(57:20) Know well that the life of this world is merely sport and diversion and adornment and an object of your boasting with one another, and a rivalry in the multiplication of riches and children. Its likeness is that of rain: when it produces vegetation it delights the tillers. But then it withers and you see it turn yellow, and then it crumbles away. In the Hereafter there is (either) grievous chastisement (or) forgiveness from Allah and (His) good pleasure. The life of this world is nothing but delusion. (36)

(36) To understand this theme fully one should keep the following verses of the Quran in mind: (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayats 14-15); (Surah Younus, Ayats 24-25); (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 18); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayats 45-46); (Surah An-Noor, Ayat 39). In all these verses the truth that has been impressed on the mind is: The life of this world is a temporary life: its spring as well as its autumn is temporary. There is much here to allure man. But this, in fact, consists of base and insignificant things which man because of his shallowness of mind regards as great and splendid and is deluded into thinking that in attaining them lies supreme success. The truth however is that the highest benefits and means of pleasure and enjoyment that one can possibly attain in the world, are indeed short and insignificant and confined to a few years of temporary life and can be destroyed by just one turn of fate. Contrary to this, the life in Hereafter is a splendid and eternal life. Its benefits are great and permanent and its losses too are great and permanent. The one who attains Allah’s forgiveness and His goodwill there, will indeed have attained the everlasting bliss beside which the entire wealth of the world and its kingdom become pale and insignificant. And the one who is seized in God’s torment there, will come to know that he had made a bad bargain even if he had attained all that he regarded as great and splendid in the world.

سَابِقُوْٓا اِلٰى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ اُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ ۭ ذٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ ۲۱

(57:21) So vie with one another (37) in seeking to attain your Lord's forgiveness and a Garden whose width is as the width of the heaven and the earth, (38) one which has been prepared for those who believe in Allah and His Messengers. That is Allah's bounty which He bestows upon those whom He pleases. Allah is the Lord of abounding bounty.

(37) Musabaqat (from which sabiqu of the original is derived) means to compete and vie with each other in order to excel. The meaning is: Give up your rivalries with one another for amassing wealth, and pleasures and benefits of the world and instead make the forgiveness of your Lord and Paradise the object of your struggle and rivalries.

(38) Some commentators have taken the word ard in arduha ka-ardis-samai wal-ard in the sense of breadth, but actually this word has been used here in the meaning of spaciousness and extensiveness. In Arabic the word ard is not only used for breadth, as a counterpart of length, but also for spaciousness, as it has been used in(Surah HaMim As-Sajdah, Ayat 51): fadhu dua in arid: Then he is full of long supplications. Besides, one should also understand that the object here is not to foretell the area or extent of Paradise, but to give an idea of its vastness and extensiveness. Here its vastness has been described as the vastness of the heaven and earth, and in Surah Aal-Imran it has been said: Hasten to follow the path that leads to your Lord’s forgiveness and to Paradise whose vastness is that of the universe, which has been prepared for the righteous (Verse 133). When both these verses are read together, one gets the idea that the gardens and palaces man will receive in Paradise will only serve as his dwelling place but the entire universe will be his home. He will not be restricted to one place as he is in this world, where just for reaching the moon, his nearest neighbor in space, he has had to struggle hard for years and expend excessive resources only to overcome the difficulties of a short journey. There the whole universe will be accessible to him. He will be able to see whatever

he would desire from his station and be able to visit whichever place he would like easily.

مَآ اَصَابَ مِنۡ مُّصِيۡبَةٍ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَلَا فِىۡۤ اَنۡفُسِكُمۡ اِلَّا فِىۡ كِتٰبٍ مِّنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ نَّبۡرَاَهَا ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيۡرٌ ۖ ٢٢

(57:22) No misfortune ever befalls on earth, nor on yourselves but We have inscribed it in the Book (39) before We make it manifest. (40) Surely that is easy for Allah. (41)

(39) A Book: the writ of destiny.

(40) Here, “it” may be referring to the affliction as well as to the earth, or the self of man, or in view of the context, to all the creatures.

(41) That is, it is not at all difficult for Allah to pre-ordain the destiny of each and every one of His creatures.

لِّكَيۡلَا تَاۡسَوۡا عَلٰى مَا فَاتَكُمۡ وَلَا تَفۡرَحُوۡا بِمَآ اٰتٰىكُمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخۡتَالٍ فَخُوۡرِ ۙ ٢٣

(57:23) (We do so) that you may not grieve over (42) the loss you suffer, nor exult over what He gave you. Allah does not love the vainglorious, the boastful,

(42) In order to understand why this has been said in that context, one should keep in mind the conditions through which the Muslims were passing at the time this Surah was revealed. An ever present danger of attack by the enemy, battles in quick succession, a state of constant siege, hardships caused by economic boycott by the disbelievers, persecution of the converts to Islam everywhere in Arabia, these were the conditions that the Muslims were confronted with at that time. The disbelievers looked upon these as a proof of the Muslims having been forsaken and rejected, and the hypocrites took these as a confirmation of their own suspicions and doubts. As for the sincere Muslims, they were facing these bravely and resolutely, yet the excess of hardship and suffering would sometimes become trying even for

them. So, the Muslims are being consoled, as if to say: No affliction, God forbid, has befallen you without the knowledge of your Lord. Whatever you are experiencing is according to the pre-ordained scheme of Allah, which is already recorded in the writ of destiny. And you are being made to pass through these trials and tribulations for the sake of your own training for the great service that Allah wills to take from you. If you are made to attain to success without passing through these hardships, weaknesses will remain in your character due to which you will neither be able to digest power and authority nor withstand the tempests and furies of falsehood.

الَّذِيۡنَ يَبۡخَلُوۡنَ وَيَاۡمُرُوۡنَ النَّاسَ بِالۡبُخۡلِ ؕ وَمَنۡ يَّتَوَلَّ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الۡغَنِىُّ الۡحَمِيۡدُ ﴿۲۴﴾

(57:24) those who are niggardly and bid others to be niggardly. (43) And he who turns away, (should know that) Allah is Self-Sufficient, Immensely Praiseworthy. (44)

(43) The allusion is to the trait of character that everyone could experience among the hypocrites in the Muslim society itself. As regards to the outward affirmation of the faith, they could not be distinguished from the true Muslims. But owing to lack of sincerity they were not receiving the sort of training that was being given to the sincere Muslims. Therefore, the little prosperity and leadership that they were enjoying in an ordinary town of Arabia, was causing them to be swollen with pride. As for their stinginess, not only were they themselves unwilling to give away anything in the cause of God Whom they professed to believe in and the Messenger (peace be upon him) whom they professed to follow and the faith which they professed to have accepted, but also tried to prevent others from making any contribution, for, they thought, it was a useless cause. Obviously, if there had been no trials and tribulations, these worthless people, who were of no use to Allah, could not be separated from the sincere and worthy believers, and without weeding them out a mixed crowd of sincere and insincere Muslims could not be entrusted with the high office of leadership of the world, the great blessings of which the world subsequently witnessed in the rightly-guided Caliphate.

(44) That is, even if after hearing these words of admonition a person does not adopt the way of sincerity, faithfulness and sacrifice for the sake of Allah and His religion, and wishes to persist in his stubbornness, which Allah disapproves, then Allah has no use for him, for Allah is All- Sufficient and Independent of His creatures. He does not stand in need of their help in any way. And He is All- Praiseworthy. People of only good qualities are acceptable to Him. People of evil character cannot be entitled to receive any favor from Him.

لَقَدۡ اَرۡسَلۡنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالۡبَيِّنٰتِ وَ اَنۡزَلۡنَا مَعَهُمُ الۡكِتٰبَ وَ الۡمِيۡزَانَ لِيَقُوۡمَ النَّاسُ بِالۡقِسۡطِ وَ اَنۡزَلۡنَا الۡحَدِيۡدَ فِيۡهِ بَاۡسٌ شَدِيۡدٌ وَّ مَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَ لِيَعۡلَمَ اللّٰهُ مَنۡ يَّنۡصُرُهٗ وَ رُسُلَهٗ بِالۡغَيۡبِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيۡزٌ ﴿۲۵﴾

(57:25) Indeed We sent Our Messengers with Clear Signs, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance that people may uphold justice. (45) And We sent down iron, wherein there is awesome power and many benefits for people, (46) so that Allah may know who, without even having seen Him, helps Him and His Messengers. Surely Allah is Most Strong, Most Mighty. (47)

(45) In this brief sentence the whole essence of the mission of the Prophets bas been compressed, which one should clearly understand. It says that all the Messengers who came to the world from Allah, brought three things:

(1) Bayyenaat: manifest signs which clearly showed that they were really Allah’s Messengers, and were not impostors; convincing arguments which made it evident that what they were presenting as truth was really the truth, and what they condemned as falsehood was really falsehood. Clear instructions which told without any ambiguity what was the right way for the people in respect of beliefs, morals, acts of worship and dealings, which they should adopt, and what were the wrong ways which they should shun and avoid.

(2) Kitab: the Book which contained all the teachings required for the guidance of man so that people may turn to it for enlightenment.

(3) Mizan: the criterion of truth and falsehood which may precisely indicate, like a balance, the golden mean between two extremes in matters of thought, morals and dealings.

The object for which the Prophets were sent with these three things was that man's conduct in the world and the system of human life, individually as well as collectively, should be established with justice. On one hand, every man should precisely know the rights of God, the rights of his self and the rights of all those people with whom he may have to deal in any way, and should fulfill them faithfully. And on the other hand, the system of collective life should be built on such principles as should eliminate every kind of injustice from society, should safeguard every aspect of civilization and social life against extremism, should establish correct balance and equity in all spheres of collective life, so that all elements of society should receive their rights equitably and fulfill their obligations and duties responsibly.

In other words, the object of sending the prophets was to establish individual as well as collective justice. They wanted to establish justice in the personal life of each individual so as to bring about poise and equilibrium in his mind, his character, his conduct and his dealings. They also wanted to establish the whole system of human society on justice so that both the individual and the society should assist and cooperate with each other in their spiritual, moral and material well-being instead of being a hindrance and obstacle.

(46) Sending down iron means creating iron in the earth just as in (Surah Az-Zumar, Ayat 6) it has been said: He sent down for you eight heads of cattle, male and female. As whatever exists in the earth, has come here by Allah's command, and has not appeared by itself. Its being created has been expressed in the Quran as its being sent down. The mention of sending down iron which has great strength and other benefits for men immediately after stating the object of the mission of the Prophets by itself indicates that by iron here is meant political and military power. Thus the verse means: Allah did not raise His Prophets in the world just to

present a scheme for the establishment of justice, but it was also a part of their mission to endeavor to enforce it practically, to collect necessary power to establish justice in all spheres of life, to punish those who might disrupt it and to break the power of those who might resist it.

(47) That is, Allah does not need this help because He is neither weak nor cannot use His power to accomplish this work, but He has adopted this method for the trial of men. Man can advance on the way of his progress and well-being only by passing through this trial. Allah indeed has the power to subdue all the disbelievers by one command whenever He wills and give to His Messengers complete dominance over them, but in that case the believers in the Messengers would have nothing to do for which they should become entitled to rewards. That is why Allah instead of accomplishing this mission through His dominant power adopted the method of sending His Messengers to human beings with the signs and the Book and the criterion, and enjoined them to present the way of justice before the people and exhort them to refrain and desist from wickedness sad injustice At the same time, He gave us full option to accept the message of the Messengers or to reject it. He summoned those who accepted the invitation to come forward and help Him and His Messengers to establish justice, and to exert their utmost against those who were bent upon retaining the unjust system. Thus, Allah wants to see who among us reject the invitation to justice, who exert with their lives in order to retain injustice as against justice, who shirk supporting struggling for the cause of the message of justice after they have accepted it, and who stake their lives and their possessions for the sake of unseen God to help the truth become dominant in the world. Only for those who emerge successful in this test will avenues to future progress be opened up.

وَ لَقَدۡ اَرۡسَلۡنَا نُوۡحًا وَّ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ وَ جَعَلۡنَا فِىۡ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا النُّبُوَّةَ وَ الۡكِتٰبَ فَمِنۡهُمۡ مُّهۡتَدٍ ۚ وَ كَثِيۡرٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ فٰسِقُوۡنَ ۖ﴿۲۷﴾

(57:26) Indeed We [48] sent forth Noah and Abraham and established in their line Prophecy and the Book. [49] Then some of them embraced the guidance and many of them are wicked. [50]

(48) Now it is being told what corruptions appeared among those who believed in the Prophets who came to the world before the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) with the signs and the Book and the criterion.

(49) That is, whichever Messenger came with Allah’s Book, was from the progeny of the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) and, after him, from the progeny of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him).

(50) Became transgressors and disobedient.

ثُمَّ قَفَّيۡنَا عَلٰۤى اٰثَارِهِمۡ بِرُسُلِنَا وَ قَفَّيۡنَا بِعِيۡسَى ابۡنِ مَرۡيَمَ وَ اٰتَيۡنٰهُ
الۡاِنۡجِيۡلَ ۙ وَجَعَلۡنَا فِىۡ قُلُوۡبِ الَّذِيۡنَ اتَّبَعُوۡهُ رَاۡفَةً وَّ رَحۡمَةً ؕ وَ رَهۡبَانِيَّةَ ۨ ابۡتَدَعُوۡهَا مَا كَتَبۡنٰهَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ
اِلَّا ابۡتِغَآءَ رِضۡوَانِ اللّٰهِ فَمَا رَعَوۡهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا ۚ فَاٰتَيۡنَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا مِنۡهُمۡ اَجۡرَهُمۡ ۚ وَ كَثِيۡرٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ
فٰسِقُوۡنَ ﴿۲۷﴾

(57:27) In their wake, We sent a succession of Our Messengers, and raised Jesus, son of Mary, after all of them, and bestowed upon him the Evangel, and We set tenderness and mercy[51] in the hearts of those that followed him. As for monasticism,[52] it is they who invented it;[53] We did not prescribe it for them. They themselves invented it in pursuit of Allah's good pleasure, and then they did not observe it as it ought to have been observed.[54] So We gave their reward to those of them that believed. But many of them are wicked.

(51) The words in the text are rafat and rahmat, which are almost synonymous. But when they are used together, rafat implies the compassion that a person feels on seeing another person in pain and distress, and rahmat is the feeling under which bhe tries to help him. As the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) was highly compassionate and merciful towards the people, his this trait of character deeply influenced his disciples: therefore, they treated the people with pity and sympathy and served them with all their heart and soul.

(52) The root rahb (from which rahbaniyyat or ruhbaniyyat is derived) means fear; thus rahbaniyyat means a mode of life which reflects fear and terror, and ruhbaniyyat means the mode of life of the terrified. As a term it implies a person's abandoning the world out of fear (whether it is the fear of somebody's tyranny, or fear of the worldly temptations and distractions, or fear of one's personal weaknesses) and taking refuge in the jungles and mountains, or living alone as a hermit.

(53) The words in the original can have two meanings:

(1) That We did not enjoin monasticism (ruhbaniyyat) upon them. We enjoined upon them only the seeking of Allah's good pleasure.

(2) That monasticism was not enjoined by Us. They of their own accord enjoined it on themselves, to seek Allah's good pleasure. In both cases this verse makes it explicit that monasticism is an un-Islamic creed, and it has never been part of the true faith. The same thing has been stated by the Prophet (peace be upon him) thus: There is no monasticism in Islam. (Musnad Ahmed). In another Hadith the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The monasticism of this ummah is to fight in the way of Allah. (Musnad Ahmed Musnad Abi Yala. That is, the way for this ummah to attain to spiritual piety lies not in abandoning the world but in fighting in Allah's way. This ummah does not flee to the jungles and mountains out of fear of temptations and distractions but counteracts them by resort to fighting in Allah's way. According to a tradition related both by Bukhari and by Muslim, one of the companions said that he would keep up Prayers throughout the night; another said that he would fast perpetually without ever observing a break; and a third one said the he would never marry and would have nothing to do with women. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) came to know of what they had resolved, he said: By God, I fear Allah the most and remain conscious of Him at all times; yet my way is that I observe the fast as well as break it. I keep up the Prayer during the night as well as have sleep. And I marry the women also. The one who does not follow my way, does not belong to me. Anas says that

the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to say: Do not be hard and severe to yourselves, lest Allah should be hard and severe to you. A community had adopted this way of severity towards itself, then Allah also seized it in severity. Look, the remainder of them are found in the monasteries and churches. (Abu Daud).

(54) That is, they were involved in a double error. First, they imposed on themselves the restrictions which Allah had not imposed. Second, they did not observe in the right spirit the restrictions that they had imposed upon themselves with a view to attain to Allah's goodwill, and conducted themselves in a way as to earn Allah's wrath instead of His good pleasure.

To understand this theme fully we should have a look at the history of Christian Monasticism.

Until 200 years after the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), the Christian Church knew no monasticism. Its germs, however, were found in Christianity from the very beginning. To look upon asceticism as a moral ideal and to regard celibacy as superior to matrimonial and mundane life is the basis of monasticism. Both these existed in Christianity from the beginning. Owing to the sanctification of celibacy in particular, it was considered undesirable for those who performed religious services in the church to marry, have children and be involved in domestic chores; so much so that by the 3rd century monasticism began to spread like an epidemic in Christendom. Historically, it had three main causes.

First, sensuality, immorality and worship of the world had so permeated the ancient polytheistic society that in their zeal to counteract it, the Christian scholars adopted the extremist way instead of the way of moderation. They so stressed chastity that the relationship between man and woman by itself came to be looked upon as filthy, even if it was within marriage. They reacted so violently to monasticism that to possess property of any kind ultimately was considered a sin for a religious person and to live like a poor man and ascetic the criterion of moral excellence. Likewise, in their reaction to the sensuality of the polytheistic

society, they touched the other extreme. They made withdrawal from pleasure and all material comforts, self-denial and curbing of the desires as the object of morality. They regarded torturing the body by different sorts of harsh discipline as the climax and proof of a person's spirituality.

Secondly, when Christianity started achieving successes and spreading rapidly among the common people, the Church in its zeal to attract more and more adherents went on imbibing every evil that was prevalent in society. Thus, saint-worship replaced the ancient deities. Images of Christ and Mary began to be worshiped instead of the idols of Horus and Isis. Christmas took the place of Saturnalia. Christian monks began to practice every kind of occult art like curing the sick by amulets and magic incantations, taking omens and fortune-telling, driving out spirits, etc. as were prevalent in ancient days. Likewise, since the common people looked upon a dirty and naked person who lived in a cave or den as a holy and godly man, this very concept of sainthood became prevalent in the Christian Church, and legends of their miraculous powers began to abound in the memoirs of the Christian saints.

Thirdly, the Christians possessed no detailed law and definite traditions and practices to determine the bounds of religion. They had given up Mosaic Law and the Gospel by itself afforded no perfect code of guidance. Therefore, the Christian doctors went on permitting every kind of innovation to enter the religion partly under the influence of alien philosophies, customs and practices and partly under their personal preference and whim. Monasticism was one such innovation. Christian scholars and doctors of law took its philosophy and rules and practices from the Buddhist monks, Hindu Yogis and ascetics, Egyptian Anchorites, Iranian Manicheans, and the followers of Plato and Plotinus, and made the same the means and methods of attaining self-purification, spiritual loftiness and nearness to God. Those who committed this error were not ordinary men. From the 3rd to the 7th century (i.e. till about the time the Quran began to be revealed) the religious personalities who were recognized as the foremost scholars and religious guides and leaders of Christendom, both in the East and in the West, St. Athanasius, St.

Basil, St. Gregory of Bazianzus, St. Chrysostom, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine St. Benedict, St. Gregory the Great, all were monks themselves and great upholders of monasticism. It was under their influence that monasticism became popular in the Church.

Historically, monasticism among the Christians started from Egypt. Its founder was St. Anthony (A.D. 250 -350) who is regarded as the father of Christian Monasticism. He set up the first monastery at Pispir (now Der al Memum) in the Fayum. Later he established another monastery on the coast of the Red Sea, which is now called Der Mar Antonius. The basic cults of Christian Monasticism are derived from his writings and instructions. After this beginning the monastic movements spread like a flood in Egypt and monasteries for monks and nuns were set up everywhere in the land in some of which lived three thousand monks at a time. In 325 another ascetic, pachomius, appeared in Egypt, who founded ten major monasteries and nunneries for the monks and nuns. The monastic movement then began to spread in Palestine and Syria and different countries of Africa and Europe. The Christian Church in the beginning experienced some confusion in connection with monasticism, for although it recognized abandonment of the world, celibacy and voluntary poverty as an ideal of spiritual life, yet it could not declare marriage, producing children and possessing property or money to be sinful as the monks did. Subsequently, under the influence of holy men like St. Athanasius (d. 373), St. Basil (d. 379), St. Augustine (d. 430) and Gregory the Great (d. 609) many of the monastic rules became part and parcel of the Church.

This monastic innovation has some characteristics which are briefly as follows:

1. Inflicting pain on the body by severe exercises and novel methods. In this thing every monk tried to surpass the other. The achievements of these holy men as related in the memoirs of the Christian saints are to this effect: St. Macarius of Alexandria constantly carried on himself a weight of 80 pounds. For six months he slept in a swamp

while poisonous flies preyed on his naked body. His disciple, St. Eusebius, even surpassed his master in suffering severities and rigors. He moved about carrying a weight of 150 pounds, and lay in a dry well for three years. St. Saba ate the maize that would start stinking having been soaked in water for a whole month. St. Bassarion lay in thorny bushes for 40 days and did not rest his back on the ground for 40 years. St. Pachomius passed 15 years of his life, and according to another tradition 50 years, without putting his back on the ground. St. John remained standing in worship for three years during which he neither sat nor lay down, he would only recline at times against a rock. His food consisted of the offering that was brought for him every Sunday. St. Simeon Styiltes (390- 449) who is counted among the most illustrious Christian saints, used to observe an un-broken 40 days fast and smiling. Owing to such concepts the bond of marriage between man and woman came to be looked upon as filthy. A monk was forbidden even to look at a woman, not to speak of marriage, and was required to abandon his wife if he was married. As for men it was also impressed on the women that if they wished to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, they should shun marriage and remain spinsters and if they were married, they should separate from their husbands. St. Jerome, the distinguished Christian scholar, ruled that the woman who remained a spinster as a nun for the sake of Christ, was the bride of Christ, and her mother was the mother-in-law of Christ, i.e. God. Elsewhere St. Jerome says: To cut asunder the bond of marriage with the ax of chastity is the primary duty of the true devotee of God. The first impact these teachings had on a Christian man or Christian woman, under religious fervor, was that his or her married life was ruined. And since there was no provision for divorce or separation in Christianity, the husband and the wife would separate from each other while they remained bound in wed-lock. St. Nilus was father of two children. When he came under the spell of monasticism, he immediately separated from his wife. St. Ammon, on the first night of his marriage, gave his bride a

sermon on the filthiness of the marriage bond and then the two between themselves decided to keep aloof from each other throughout life. St. Abraham abandoned his wife on the very first night of marriage. The same was done by St. Alexis. The memoirs of the Christian saints are full of such incidents.

The Church continued to resist in one way or the other these extremist concepts for three centuries. In those days it was not required of a priest to be single and unmarried. If he was married before being appointed a minister, he could keep his wife. However, he was forbidden to marry after his appointment. Moreover, a person could not be appointed a minister if he had married a widow, or a divorced woman, or had two wives, or possessed a concubine. Gradually, by the 4th century, the concept became firm that for a married person it was odious to perform religious services in the Church. The Council of Gengra (A.D. 362) was the last one in which such ideas were held as anti-religious, but a little later in 386, Roman Synod counseled the priests to avoid marriage relations and the following year Pope Siricius decreed that the priest who married, or continued to have sex relations with his wife if already married should be dismissed from office. Illustrious scholars like St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine upheld this decision most fervently, and after a little resistance it became fully enforced in the Western Church. In this period several councils were convened to consider the complaints to the effect that the people who were already married were having illicit relations with their wives even after their appointment to perform religious duties. Consequently, with a view to reform them, rules were made to the effect that they should sleep in the open, should never meet their wives in private, and should meet them only in the presence of at least two other men. St. Gregory has made mention of a wonderful priest who did not have any relation with his wife for 40 years, and when the woman approached him at his death-bed, he rebuked her, saying: Woman, keep away.

2. Their second characteristic was that they were dirty and against cleanliness and bodily care. Washing or applying

water to the body was regarded as opposed to Godworship. For, according to them purification of the body was tantamount to pollution of the soul. St. Athanasius has faithfully described this virtue of St. Anthony that he never washed his feet during life. St. Abraham, from the day he entered Christianity, neither washed his face nor feet for 50 years. A famous nun Virgin Sylvia never allowed any part of her body except the fingers to become wet with water throughout life It is said of 130 nuns of 8 convent that they never washed their feet and would shudder with horror at a mere reference to bath.

3. Monasticism practically forbade married life and ruthlessly discarded the institution of marriage. All religious writings of the 4th and 5th centuries are replete with the thought that celibacy is the highest moral virtue, and chastity meant that one should strictly abstain from sexual relation even if it was between husband and wife. The perfection of a pure spiritual life lay in complete selfdenial, with no desire for physical pleasure. It was necessary to suppress any carnal desire because it strengthened animal nature. For them pleasure and sin were synonymous so much so that being happy was regarded as being forgetful of God. St. Basil forbade even laughing before Easter every year. Once he kept standing on one leg for a whole year. Often he would leave his monastery and retire to a well. Later he got a 60 foot high pillar erected near Antioch, which was three feet wide at the top and railed round. He spent the last 30 years of his life on this pillar and remained permanently exposed to the elements. His disciples carried food to him by ladder and removed his filth. He had even tied himself to the pillar by a string, which cut into his flesh; when the flesh became rotten, it bred worms; whenever a worm fell out, he would restore it to the sore, saying: Eat what God has given you. Crowds of pilgrims flocked to him from far and near. When he died the Christian world proclaimed that he was the best model of a Christian saint.

The memoirs of the Christian saints of this period are full of such instances. One particular saint had the characteristic that he observed silence for 30 years. He was never seen speaking. Another had tied himself to a rock; another roamed the jungles

and lived on grass; another moved about carrying a heavy load; another kept his limbs and body tied in fetters and chains; some saints lived in the dens of beasts, or in dry wells, or in old graves; and some others remained naked and concealed their private parts under long hair and would crawl on the ground. After death the bones of the illustrious saints were preserved in monastery. I saw a full library decked with such bones in St. Catherine's monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai. There were skulls and foot-bones and hand bones arranged separately. A glass-case contained the whole skeleton of a saint.

4. The most painful and pathetic chapter of ascetic monasticism is that it cut asunder man's relations with his parents, with his brothers and sisters, and even his children For the Christian saints love of the parents for son, love of the brothers and sisters for brother and love of the children for father also was sinful. They believed it was necessary for man to break off all those relations for the sake of spiritual progress. In the biographies of the Christian saints one comes across highly pathetic and heart-rending incidents. A monk, St. Evagrius, had been undergoing severe exercises in the desert for many years. Suddenly one day letters reached him from his father and mother, who were passing their days in great agony without him. The saint, fearing that the letters might arouse feelings of human love in his heart, cast the letters immediately into the fire, without even opening them. The mother and sister of St. Theodorus came to the monastery where he was staying, with recommendatory letters from many priests, and desired to have only a glimpse of him, but the saint refused to come out before them. St. Marcus' mother went to the monastery to see him. She somehow obtained the abbot's permission for it and requested him to order her son to come out before her, but the son was adamant to her prayers. At last, he implemented the abbot's orders by appearing before his mother disguised and with closed eyes. Thus, neither was the mother able to recognize her son, nor the son saw his mother. Another saint, St. Poemen and his six brothers lived in a desert monastery of Egypt. Years later their old mother came to know of their whereabouts and went to see them in the monastery. As soon as the brothers saw their mother coming, they hurried into

their cell and shut the door. The mother started crying and wailing outside saying: I have traveled in this old age from a distant place only to have a glimpse of you. There will be no harm if only I see you. Am I not your mother. But the saints did not open the door and told the mother that they would meet her in the next world. Even more painful and piteous is the story of St. Simeon Stylites, who left his parents and remained away from them without any trace of his whereabouts for 27 years. The father died of grief. When the fame of the son's piety and holiness spread, the mother, who was still living in agony, came to know of his whereabouts. She came to the monastery to see him but women were not allowed to enter. She prayed that either the son should call her in, or he should himself come out to let her have a glimpse of him, but the saint refused to oblige her. The woman lay at the entrance for three days and three nights and at last breathed her last in the same state. Then the holy man emerged from his seclusion, mourned his mother's death and prayed for her forgiveness. In the same harsh way these saints treated their sisters and children. There is the story of Mutius, a prosperous man by all means. Drawn out suddenly by the religious impulse, he took his 8-year-old son and went to a monastery. But for the sake of his progress to holiness it was necessary that he should give up love of his son. Therefore, first the son was separated from him. Then the innocent child was subjected to harsh treatment before his very eyes and he watched it patiently. Then, the abbot of the monastery ordered him to go and cast the child into the river. He became ready even for this; then right at the time when he was going to throw the child into the river, the monks saved the child's life. Then it was admitted that he had actually attained to the rank of a holy man. The viewpoint of Christian monasticism in these matters was that the one who sought love of God, should break off all relations of human love that bound him in the world to his parents, his brothers and sisters and his children. St. Jerome says: Even if your nephew clings to you with his hands round your neck; even if your mother calls you back in the name of having suckled you; even if your father obstructs your way and lies down before you, you should hasten out to the banner of the cross, trampling the body of your father, without shedding a tear. Ruthlessness in this matter is

piety itself. St. Gregory writes: A young monk who could not give up love of his parents, left the monastery one night in order to pay them a visit. God punished him for this error, for as soon as he returned to the monastery, he died. His body was buried in the grave but the earth did not accept it. He was placed in the grave again and again, and the earth threw him out every time. At last, St. Benedict placed a sacred offering on his chest, and then the grave accepted him. Of a nun it is said that for three days after her death, she remained subject to a torment because she had not been able to cleanse her heart of her mother's love. About a saint it is written that he never treated anyone harshly except his relatives.

5. Their practice of meting out ruthless, cruel and harsh treatment to their nearest relatives, made their human feeling dead, with the result that they would treat with utmost enmity those with whom they had any religious differences. By the beginning of the 4th century, 80 to 90 religious sects had arisen in Christianity. St. Augustine has made mention of 88 sects of his own time, each of which regarded the other with extreme hatred. And the fire of this hatred also was fanned by the monks, who were always in the forefront to halt and destroy the opponent sects by their machinations. Alexandria was a great center of this sectarian conflict. There, in the beginning the Bishop of the Arian sect attacked the Athanasius party. Virgin nuns were dragged out of their convents, stripped naked and beaten with thorny branches and branded in order to make them give up their creed. Then, when the Roman Catholics came to power in Egypt, they treated the Arian sect likewise; so much so that according to the prevalent view Arius himself was also poisoned. Once in the same city of Alexandria the monks of St. Cyril created a turmoil. They seized a nun of the opponent sect and took her into their church; they killed her, backed her body to pieces, and cast it into the fire. Rome was not any different from this. In 366, at the death of Pope Liberius, two sects nominated their respective candidates for papacy; this resulted in great bloodshed; so much so that in one day 137 dead bodies were taken out from one church.

6. Side by side with this retreat from the world and life of seclusion and poverty, wealth of the world was also amassed most avariciously. By the beginning of the 5th century the condition was that the bishop of Rome lived in his palace like kings, and when his conveyance emerged in the city, it would be as stately and splendid as of the emperor himself. St. Jerome complains of the conditions of his time (later part of the 4th century) saying that the feast hosted by many of the bishops out-classed the feasts of the governors. The flow of wealth to monasteries and churches had assumed the proportions of a deluge by the beginning of the 7th century (the age of the revelation of the Quran). It had been deeply impressed on the minds that a person who happened to commit a grave sin could be redeemed only by making an offering at a saint's shrine, or a sacrifice at the altar of a church or monastery. Then the same world and its luxuries and comforts abstention from which was the mark of distinction of the monks, lay at their feet. The factor which, in particular, caused this decline was that when the common people developed extreme reverence for the monks because of their undergoing severe exercises of self-discipline and self-denial, hosts of world seeking people also donned the monk's garments and entered their ranks. Then under the garb of feigned poverty they turned acquisition of worldly wealth and possessions into a flourishing business.

7. In the matter of chastity monasticism was also repeatedly defeated in its fight against nature and defeated well and proper. In the monasteries some exercises of self mortification were such as required the monks and nuns to live together in one and the same place, and they had often to pass the night in the same bed in their enthusiasm for more and more temptations. St. Evagarius, the well-known monk, has praised the self-control acquired by the Palestinian monks, saying: They had mastered their passion so completely that although they bathed with the women together, looked at their bodies, touched them, even embraced them, yet they remained invincible to nature. Although bathing was an odious thing in monasticism, such baths were also taken for the sake of exercise in selfcontrol. At last, about the same Palestine, St. Gregory of Nyssa (d. 396) writes

that it bas become a center of wickedness and immorality. Human nature avenges itself on those who fight it. Monasticism fought it and ultimately fell in the pit of immorality the story of which is a most shameful blot on the religious history of the 8th to 11th centuries. An Italian bishop of the 10th century writes: If the penal law for misconduct is practically enforced against those who perform religious services in the church, none would escape punishment except the boys, and if the law to remove illegitimate children from religious services was also enforced, there might perhaps be left no boy among the attendants of the church. Books of the medieval authors are replete with the complaints that the nunneries had become houses of prostitution. Within their four walls newborn babies were being massacred; the priests and religious attendants of the church had developed illicit connections even with forbidden relatives; the crime of the unnatural act had spread like an epidemic in the monasteries; and the practice of confession had become a means of immorality in the churches. From these details, one can fully appreciate what corruption of Christianity is that which the Quran is alluding to when it says: The Christians themselves invented monasticism, but they did not observe it as it should have been observed.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاٰمِنُوۡا بِرَسُوۡلِهٖ يُؤۡتِكُمۡ كِفۡلَيۡنِ مِنۡ رَّحۡمَتِهٖ وَيَجۡعَلۡ لَّكُمۡ نُوۡرًا تَمۡشُوۡنَ بِهٖ وَيَغۡفِرۡ لَكُمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ ۲۸

(57:28) Believers, have fear of Allah and believe in His Messenger, [55] and He will grant you a two-fold portion of His Mercy, and will appoint for you a light whereby you shall walk; [56] and He will forgive you. [57] Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.

(55) The commentators differ in the explanation of this verse, One group says that the address here is directed to the people who believed in the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). It is being said to them: Believe in the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) now; for this you will be given a double reward, one reward for believing in the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) and the other reward for believing in the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The second group says that the followers of the

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are being addressed. They are being admonished to the effect: Do not rest content with your verbal affirmation of the faith only, but you should believe sincerely and truly. For this you will be given a double reward: one reward for giving up disbelief and turning to Islam, and the second reward for believing sincerely in Islam and remaining steadfast to it. The first commentary is supported by (verses 52-54 of Surah Al-Qasas), and furthermore by the tradition reported by Abu Musa al-Ashari, according to which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: There are three men who will get a double reward, one of them is a person from among the followers of the earlier Books who believed in this earlier Prophet and then believed in the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). (Bukhari Muslim). The second commentary is supported by(Verse 37 of Surah Saba), which says that the righteous believers will have a double reward. From the point of view of argument both the commentaries are equally weighty. However, considering the theme that follows, one feels that the second commentary is more in keeping with the context here; and in fact the whole theme of this Surah, from beginning to end, supports this very commentary. From the beginning of this Surah the addressees are the people who had entered Islam after affirming the Prophethood of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and it is they whom the Surah invites to believe sincerely and truly and not merely verbally with the tongue.

(56) That is, He will bless you with such a light of knowledge and vision in the world by which you will be able clearly distinguish at every step the straight way of Islam from the crooked paths of ignorance in different matters of life, and in the Hereafter He will grant you the light that has been mentioned in verse 12 above.

(57) That is, He will forgive you your errors that you may happen to commit due to human weaknesses in spite of your sincere efforts to fulfill the demands of the faith, and will also forgive those sins of yours that you had committed in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance.

لِّئَلَّا يَعۡلَمَ اَهۡلُ الۡكِتٰبِ اَلَّا يَقۡدِرُوۡنَ عَلٰى شَىۡءٍ مِّنۡ فَضۡلِ اللّٰهِ وَاَنَّ الۡفَضۡلَ بِيَدِ اللّٰهِ يُؤۡتِيۡهِ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الۡفَضۡلِ الۡعَظِيۡمِ ۝٢٩

(57:29) (You should do this) so that the People of the Book know that they have no control over Allah's Bounty, and that all bounty is in Allah's Hand; He bestows it on whomsoever He pleases. Allah is the Lord of abounding bounty.